

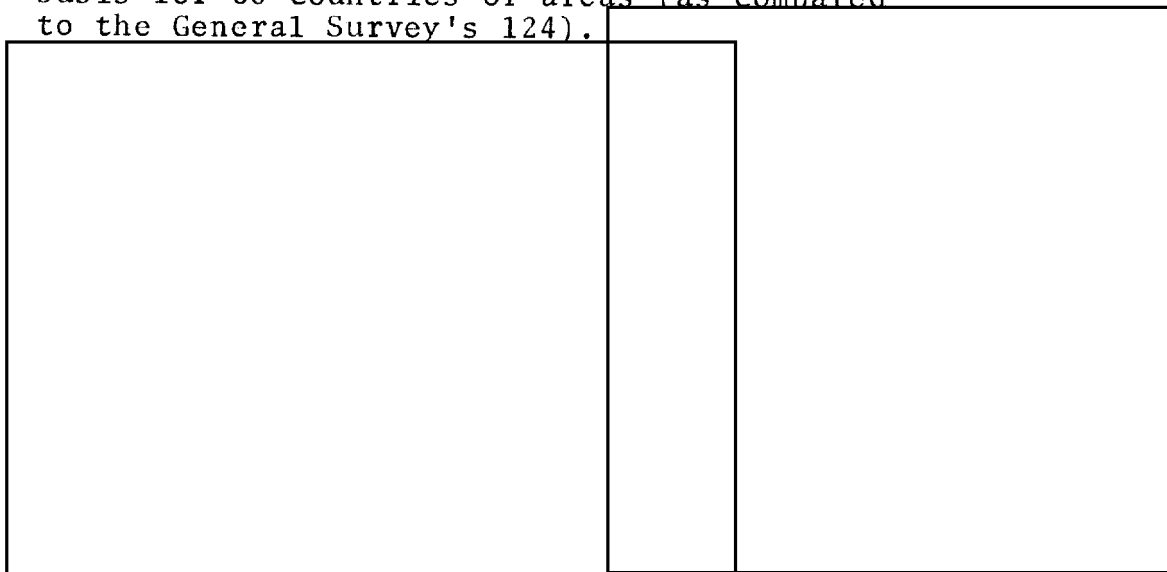
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The Area Handbook: A Comparative Reassessment
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SUMMARY -- There is clear duplication between the Army's Area Handbook series and the NIS General Survey, even though the former is labeled "operations research" and not "basic intelligence." Despite its controversial origins, the Handbook has become institutionalized and is attempting to research and produce books on a fairly current basis for 86 countries or areas (as compared to the General Survey's 124).

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INTRODUCTION -- No one familiar with the field of basic intelligence--as analyst, processor, or user--can have failed to note the existence of two distinctly overlapping yet different publications, the NIS General Survey published by the Intelligence Community through the CIA and the Area Handbook produced for the Department of the Army. The former is national intelligence for the use of the U.S. Government; the latter is unclassified "operations research" done by a contract staff at the American

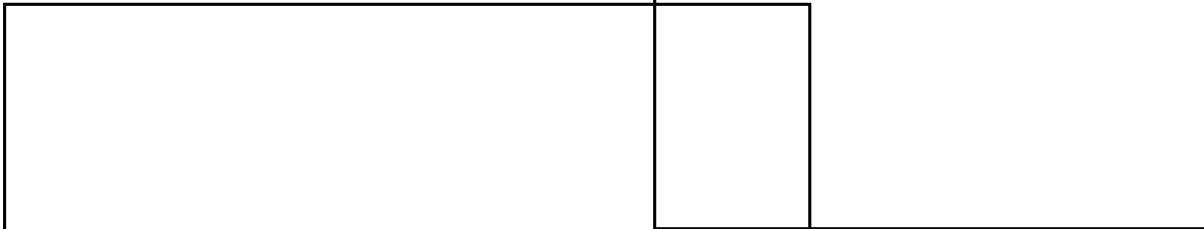
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University. How this apparent duplication came about, why it persists, and how the two publications differ as well as overlap will be discussed here,

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HISTORY -- While the NIS General Survey is descended directly from the World War II JANIS series and is the surviving publication of the once broad-reaching National Intelligence Survey concept of the 1950's, the Area Handbook has an even more checkered career. It can trace its ancestry to the Cross-Cultural Survey, established at Yale in 1937 and incorporated in 1949 into the Human Relations Area Files, an interuniversity organization that encompassed the anthropology faculties and facilities of Chicago, Harvard, Iowa, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Southern California, Washington, and Yale. The men who directed HRAF had utilized their skills in wartime to produce for the Office of Naval Intelligence the Military Government Handbooks for the Marshall, Caroline, Marianas, Izu, Bonin, Kurile, and Ryukyu Islands; they were thus sensitive to specialized intelligence needs that could be met only by qualified researchers. Drawing on their contacts in government,

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they were able, starting in about 1950, to obtain financial aid for their research [REDACTED]

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STATINTL for this funding, they supplied each agency with a set of their "files," which consisted of many thousand 5x8-inch slips of white paper on which extracts from anthropological sources were reproduced. The sources were chosen by consensus of the member universities, and material was extracted and printed under a system of numbered (10 to 888) topical headings that covered background information well beyond the field of cultural anthropology. Each "file" covered a distinctive culture or subculture, and the initial emphasis was on primitive peoples--the Jivaro, the Azande, the Eskimo, American Indian tribes, etc.

To fully explain the files and how they were used in the government, I must fall back on personal experience. In 1952, I was a lieutenant on active duty in the Office of Naval Intelligence [REDACTED]

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25X1 [REDACTED] assuming that job, I learned that I was responsible for the Navy's set of the HRAF files, which were still in their boxes and not yet cross-filed (that is, arranged according to the category numbers). Because the Korean War was still on, I arranged the file on the Koreans in

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its proper order and gave several demonstrations of its use, including a competitive session in which analysts asked questions of both the file and various NIS sections (the consensus was that the HRAF files, while very detailed, were clumsy to use and were often contradictory in that several sources' views were included without comment or evaluation). However, a set of the Korean files was forwarded to the intelligence center of Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

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the greater utility of selectively compiling such information in book form rather than leaving it in an unwieldy collection of file card boxes.

At about this time, the Army psywar people in G-3 were agitating for more and better intelligence support than they were getting, stressing their need for information on cultural factors, vulnerabilities, and national traits. According to hearsay from my contacts in G-3, the requirements they had levied on G-2 were not being met, and to get the needed background intelligence, G-3 obtained "operations research" funding to enable HRAF to

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produce foreign area handbooks. HRAF went on to write a number of studies for the Army on this basis until it dropped its governmental research connections in the 1960's; the task was then taken over by the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) affiliated with the American University. SORO eventually dissolved, and the Handbooks became the responsibility of Foreign Area Studies at the American University, which has continued to produce them. Annex A, attached, shows the countries and areas covered by Handbooks and their dates of issue; it also gives comparative NIS General Survey coverage and dates. In general, the NIS is more up-to-date than the Handbooks; for the 86 countries for which research is duplicated, the General Survey has a plus factor of 122 years.

DISCUSSION -- Since its beginnings as psywar support, the Area Handbook series has undergone many changes, especially as to how it is used. The Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, N.C., is still a prime customer, but there is widespread Department of Defense use of a very general nature. For example, there is an initial distribution of each Handbook (produced on a basis of 13 to 15 per year) of 1,500 to various government agencies plus 600 to Federal Depository Libraries for resale to the public. The average pressrun is about 3,000, unless the book is a known bestseller (e.g., China, Germany, Japan, Vietnam),

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in which case it could be as high as 15,000. A sampling of the first six months of FY72, for example, showed that 877 copies of West Germany were distributed, 861 copies of the Soviet Union, followed by 736 for North Vietnam, 701 for South Vietnam, and 607 for Korea. Other "active" books included Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Panama, and, at the bottom of the top 12, China with 298. The bottom 11 books for that period averaged a distribution of 0 to 24

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to usage seems to be areas where U.S. troops are stationed, so that a major use would now appear to be as a familiarization manual for troops and their families.

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There is much variation as to cost, however, since some Handbooks are completely revised, while others are updated by a summary statement of developments that precedes a reprint of the old version. Printing is a problem for the producers; they have had delays of up to 17 months between research and publication. In addition, the GPO lets the printing out on contract, and for each of the past 3 years, the printer has been changed because of problems, poor work, or delays.

Sales to the general public of unclassified Handbooks have totaled 191,000 copies over the period of FY69-72, at prices ranging from \$1.25 to \$5.50 each. The GPO usually includes a 10% margin over cost. During that same period, 394,000 copies were delivered to various Government agencies, with Army, the other services (especially the Marines), and State leading as users. Because of budgetary and storage restrictions, only 1 year's supply of each Handbook is kept in the Army supply depository.

In the course of my discussions on the Area Handbook with State's Office of External Research, Deputy Director Daniel Fendrick, said that his office has continued to monitor the Handbooks

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[REDACTED] Fendrick volunteered the opinion that it was about time someone took a look at the Handbooks as being very duplicative of the NIS, despite their non-intelligence orientation.

Since the Handbooks are generalized background studies that emphasize sociological, political, economic, and military factors (most of the books have four sections--Social, Political, Economic, and National Security), duplication or overlap with the NIS General Survey is unavoidable. Levels of detail and depth of analysis vary within the publications, but in general, the Handbook includes a fairly extensive historical background and sociological discussion. In fact, many OCI analysts who formerly prepared General Survey sections on the society drew heavily on the Handbooks in their research, since the latter were compiled from the same open sources that OCI was using. In other areas, the Handbooks are less authoritative. Their level of political analysis tends to be shallow, leaning heavily on constitutions and organizational manuals that state

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how things ought to be rather than how they actually function. Background information on geography slanted toward military operations, on the capacity of transportation systems, and on military capabilities suffers from the inability of the Handbook researchers to draw on classified sources and expertise. Given the Handbooks' academic origin and the background of the researchers who produce them, the emphasis on and skill in describing cultural aspects is no more surprising than their tendency to follow the party line on government operations and political affairs. The Handbooks' emphasis on such details as uniforms, ranks, insignia, and decorations in the armed forces is an obvious effort to make up for the assessments of performance, capabilities, training, logistics, and personnel that are either skimpy or follow the handouts of a foreign government. Other than maps extracted from attributed sources and tables similarly lifted from IMF studies and related documents, the Handbooks make little effort to present material graphically or to illustrate key points with photos or drawings.

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escape observing the obvious duplication of research, writing, editorial, and printing effort, with both drawing on the U.S. Treasury for their support. Because the NIS effort is the greater one, its General Surveys are more up-to-date; further, the flexible format developed in 1972 permits more perishable parts of the Survey to be updated as needed, e.g., a national election might seriously change the thrust of only two or three chapters, which could then be revised. The Handbook's leadtime for research and for updating is generally quite long; the Morocco Handbook updated one published in 1965, its information was as of October 1971, and it was published in 1972. The February 1973 General Survey of Morocco, on the other hand, superseded the one dated January 1969.

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